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THE TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

A Lecture in Two Parts

BY

JUDGE W. D. WEBB

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The Trial of Jesus Christ

A Lecture in Two Parts

By JUDGE W. D. WEBB

PART FIRST

"The Trial Before Caiaphas and The Sanhedrin"

PART SECOND

"The Trial Before Pontius Pilate"

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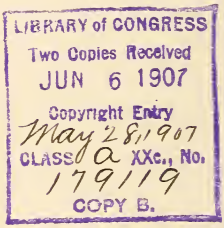

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PART FIRST.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

PART FIRST.

THE Jewish Sanhedrin, my friends, was the Supreme Judicial and Ecclesiastical Tribunal of Israel. It was composed of seventy members, presided over by an High Priest, or President, seated in an elevated position. Upon his right, sat the Vice President, or Father of the House of Judgment. Upon his left a Referee, occupying the place because of his supposed superior learning and experience, and with whom the High Priest advised whenever he wanted counsel, on questions that came before him for decision. Upon each side, and in front of these venerable and august officials, in a semi-circle, sat a row of elderly men, and in front of these, a row of middle aged men, and in front of these again, a row of young men. These young men were called disciples. Twenty-three of this number constituted a quorum, and could transact business and were called "Little Sanhedrin." The larger number was called the "Great Sanhedrin."

Under the Hebrew Law the punishment of death for crime was inflicted by stoning.

Under the Roman Law, at least in Palestine, it was by crucifixion. Crucifixion was the most horrible death that could be inflicted on a human being. People sometimes lingered three days and nights on

the cross, in the most excruciating agony, before death came to their relief.

The Hebrew Law also provided that no person should be subjected to a torturing or lingering death. It also provided, that no charge should be considered as preferred against a man until two witnesses had sworn to the commission of the offense, and had identified the person who committed it. It also provided that the witnesses upon whose testimony a person was convicted in a capital case, that is, of a crime punishable with death, should cast the first stone, and I suppose it was on this provision of the Hebrew Law, that Christ based his remark, when he said to the men, who were accusing the woman, "Let him who is without sin, first cast a stone."

There is one thing, that mankind is too apt to forget; it is this, that the central event in history is a judicial trial. The trial of an humble, uneducated man, a Judean peasant, so poor that he went on foot through the world. A wise man indeed, but not a philosopher, a King who, if he had royalty, was without family, whom nobody had chosen, born in a manger, and whom fortune had not furnished with sufficient means to enable him to procure shelter from either storm or sunshine—who had not where to lay His head—whose mission it was to suffer, and who was the lowliest and humblest of men. That the trial and execution of such a person should be of any considerable importance to the world is indeed wonderful.

History presents many Judicial tragedies, capital

trials like that of Socrates, Charles the First of England, Mary of Scotland, persons of great learning or royal blood; but the trial and execution of Jesus Christ, has produced a more profound impression on the world than all others combined. And this is perhaps more so from the fact that a few words in Tacitus, a disputed sentence or two in Josephus, some references and execrations in the Talmud, is about all there is, in what we will venture to call contemporaneous literature, concerning Jesus of Nazareth; yet the civilized world keeps Christmas day in honor of His birth. He rose from the dead and Easter is everywhere observed; and, as if time stopped at His tomb and tarried in his flight, when He comes forth a new Sabbath sheds its glorious light upon the world, to commemorate His victory over death and the grave.

Nor is this all. At the birth of this Judean Peasant, the calendar clock of the world's time is stopped and re-set, and the cycles of the years both backward and forward are from thenceforth counted from his coming; and we are twenty centuries removed from the time when the star of Bethlehem guided the wise men of the East to his manger cradle.

When Caesar dies at the foot of Pompey's statue the current of Roman history is changed. But when Jesus Christ dies on Calvary, a moral revolution, greater than any the world has ever witnessed, transforms centuries. The influence of the life, personality and death of Jesus Christ has no parallel in

history. It can have none. There is nothing like it. There is nothing that can be like it. The influence of the life, personality and death of Alexander and Hannibal and Caesar and Charlemagne and Napoleon were but temporary and local. The kingdoms they built have long since crumbled away. But the kingdom established by Jesus Christ, *still* survives and will endure forever. Another such life, history and death, with like results, would be as miraculous as the making of a world. These miraculous conditions cannot be accounted for, except upon the fact that Christ was what he claimed to be, the Son of God.

Jesus Christ was a Jew. It was the Jews who caused him to be crucified. In the Talmud, their sacred book, he is spoken of as a youth of great beauty, eloquence and promise, who, being educated at the Jerusalem college of the Rabbi's was led by ambition to set up opposing doctrines, and to assert his authority in opposition to them. They admit, in these, their sacred volumes, that he performed stupendous miracles, in general such as is recorded in the New Testament, and claim to account for it by this absurd statement—that he secretly entered the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple, and stole from thence the ineffable name of Jehovah, which he hid in a gash in the flesh of his arm, that by that name he was enabled to perform these wonders. But this being taken away from Him while He was asleep, He lost all miraculous power and so fell an easy prey to His enemies, and was publicly exe-

cuted. That His disciples stole away His body and claimed that He had risen from the dead.

The death and burial of Jesus Christ was the result of a two-fold criminal trial. One under the Hebrew and one under the Roman law. All lawyers concede that the most august of all jurisprudences is that of ancient Rome. But the most peculiar and probably the most venerable is that of the Jewish Commonwealth. In the trial of Jesus Christ these two famous and diverse systems of jurisprudence met. And they met in the most striking and influential event, indeed, that has ever occurred on this earth, as well, also, as it is the most important. The Hebrew trial, or the Hebrew branch of the trial, came first. Without doubt Christ knew the security the law governing criminal trials in capital cases, furnished the accused; and knew also what his rights were. He knew that the Hebrew Commonwealth and the institutions regulated by it were pervaded by a deep sense of justice, righteousness and law. The Talmud consists of forty folios or books, the central part of which is comprised in twelve volumes and is called the Mishna. The Mishna consists almost entirely of law. It was compiled about two hundred years after the death of Christ, from oral law, which had been growing in use and authority ever since the return of the nation from Babylon, and was a brief abstract of about eight hundred years legal production. It was as familiar to the Hebrew people as the *"lex mercatoria"* or the "law merchant," that is the law governing bills of ex-

change and promissory notes, is today to us and the people of England, and it came into use in about the same way. This code of the criminal law of the Jews, which was in existence at the date of the High Priestship of Annas and Caiaphas, was as well understood by the Jewish people as the common law is understood by us and the people of Great Britain. Christ was doubtless as familiar with it as any other subject of the Jewish Commonwealth. He knew that He was guarded on every side of the great principles of justice and security from punishment unless surely guilty of crime, that pervaded the Jewish system of criminal jurisprudence. Some of these principles which were clearly and distinctly understood by every person of reasonable intelligence and information among the Jews, were as follows: "Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in the judgment." "When a judge decides not according to truth, he makes the majesty of God depart from Israel; but if he judges according to truth, were it only for one hour, it is as if he had established the whole world; for it is in judgment that the Divine presence in Israel has its habitation." "Be cautious and slow in judgment; send forth many disciples, and make a fence around the law."

Christ was doubtless aware also, of the difference in Hebrew law, between civil and criminal cases. That is, the difference between trials for money and trials for life. Long before the time of Jesus the value set by the law on the life of a He-

brew citizen had led to extraordinary precautions. They had four great rules in their criminal jurisprudence, they were: First. "Strictness in the accusation." And then the testimony had to be confined strictly to the accusation. Second. "Publicity in the discussion." They had no right to try one in secret, everybody had the right to attend. Third. "Full freedom accorded to the accused." They had no right to imprison one during a trial, or to bind him with cords. Fourth. "Assurance against all danger of errors in testimony."

It will be observed that these rules lean, almost ostentatiously, to the side of the accused, in cases of trials for life. Indeed, so far does this go, that modern Jews are disposed to resent capital punishment, as abhorent to the whole system of Hebrew jurisprudence.

The Mishna quotes the saying of Eleazor that, "The sanhedrin which so often as once in seven years condemns a man to death is a slaughter house." One of the writers of the Mishna, Rabbi Meir, says: "What doth God say when the malefactor suffers the anguish due to his crime. He says, 'My head and limbs are pained,' and if he so speaks of the sufferings of the guilty, what would he say when the righteous is condemned," and so, to save innocent blood, to hedge around and shelter the sacred house of life, rule after rule was laid down in successive lines of circumvalation and presumption, in favor of the accused, and were accumulated until a false conviction became impossible. Under such

rules as these, it hardly seems the Saviour could have been convicted. For the purpose now of laying the foundations for further showing how the laws of the Hebrew commonwealth were violated, in the trial of Jesus Christ, we will call attention to the difference in Hebrew law between trials for money and trials for life.

Trials for money could be commenced only in the daytime, but might be concluded after night fall—trials for life could be commenced only in daytime and must be concluded in the daytime. Trials for money could be concluded either by condemnation or acquittal, on the day on which they were begun —trials for life could be concluded on the day on which they were begun, if there were an acquittal, but if a conviction, they must be postponed until the second day. For this reason, (now mark this please) capital trials could not be held on the day before the Sabbath (Friday) nor a feast day, or an high day.

Christ was arrested on Thursday night. When Peter and John a little later were taken into custody they were put into a ward until the next day "because it was eventide." But Christ was led by his armed escort immediately into the presence of Annas, who, after some examination, and illegal questions, sent him bound to Caiaphas, probably another department of the sacredotal palace. But at all events immediately after his arrest that night, and in the night time, an examination took place, and then somewhat later but during the same night, the

form, or order of a regular public trial was proceeded with. Witnesses were examined, and what we will call the confession was made, and condemnation pronounced. And this trial upon the assembling of the Council in the morning was confirmed. All this was illegal and in gross violation of the laws and rules of procedure in criminal cases."

The better opinion undoubtedly is that the crucifixion took place on Friday, the day before the Sabbath, which was also an high-day. The meeting of the great council to review and approve his sentence of death, took place on the same Friday morning Christ having been arrested on Thursday night, could not be legally put upon His trial that night, nor Friday, because it was the day before the Sabbath, and an high-day, nor Saturday, because it was the Sabbath, and not until Sunday. Such a meeting, therefore, of the great council, was forbidden by Jewish law, unless it were to register an acquittal; but if the Court was unable at once to acquit, it was bound to adjourn for at least twenty-four hours before meeting for final judgment. And such final meeting could not be lawfully held on the Sabbath. The necessity of an adjournment of a capital trial in order to secure the rights of the accused, is very clearly shown by the detail, regulations of the Mishna.

I quote, "If a man is found innocent the Court absolves him. But if not his judgment is put off to the following day. Meantime, the judges meet together, and eating little meat and drinking no wine,

during the whole day, they confer upon the cause. On the following day they return into Court, and vote over again, with the like precautions as before.

"If judgment is at last pronounced, they bring out the man sentenced and stone him. The place of punishment is apart from the place of judgment. In the meantime an officer is to stand at the door of the Court with a handkerchief in his hand; another, mounted on horseback, follows the procession so far, but halts at the farthest point where he can see the man with the handkerchief. The judges remain sitting and if anyone offers himself to prove that the condemned man is innocent, he at the door waves the handkerchief, and the horseman instantly gallops after the condemned and recalls him for further defense."

The period when these rules and principles were growing in use and authority stretched from the return from the captivity, to about before Christ 220, and this age of judicial caution was succeeded by the so-called age of the "Sanhedrin," which for the next 400 years worked out in detail and perfected these rules, so that, it seems that at the time of the trial of Jesus Christ, in trials for life, these rules of almost pedantic caution were being administered and applied, above all other things by the Sanhedrin. The Jewish law set the highest possible value on the life of a Hebrew citizen. Hence these extraordinary precautions in the administration of the criminal laws of the Jews. In no case were these rules so absolutely necessary to justice as where the ac-

cused was arrested after nightfall and put upon his trial before daybreak, without any opportunity to summon witnesses in his defense. The open injustice of putting Christ upon His trial, under the cloud of night, in violation of these time honored and judicious principles was an atrocity never before witnessed in Hebrew jurisprudence. It would have been an intolerable scandal even in a civil suit. But that a grave criminal case, involving a pronounciation of the death penalty on a son of Isreal, acknowledged to be "mighty in deed and word before all the people," should be begun, continued and finished, and the sentence of death pronounced between midnight and morning was a violence done to the forms and rules of Hebrew law, as well as the principles of justice.

I am aware that many eminent ecclesiastics claim that there were seven distinct and separate trials of the Saviour. Dean Farrar says, there were six. This to me, however, does not seem to be so. In my judgment there were but two; one before Caiaphas and the little Sanhedrin, in the night time approved of in the morning by the great Sanhedrin under the Hebrew, and one before Pontius Pilate, under the Roman law. But these two trials were for different alleged offenses. Christ was arrested on Thursday night, April 14th, A. D. 30, when he was thirty-three years of age. Jesus was born, you will remember, four years earlier than the time from which we date, or before Christ 4, in the 750th year of Rome. After his arrest that night he was

taken immediately into the presence of Annas. There may be some question as to whether Annas was a high priest. The Jews so regarded him, but he had been deposed by the Roman power, and, as his authority might be questioned when the case should go before Pilate, the Roman governor, Annas doubtless deemed it advisable to send him to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, about whose official character there was no question, as he was an high priest that year under Roman appointment.

Annas was by far the most influential member of the Sanhedrin. He had five sons in that body. By Annas, Jesus was sent to Caiaphas, but not, however, until an examination before him was commenced, probably by sitting privately, but certainly before any accusation was made or before any witnesses were called. The first of the four great rules, therefore, of the Hebrew criminal law was violated. Strictness in the accusation.

It was violated in there not being any accusation at all. The depositions of the first witnesses were, under the Hebrew law, the accusation. Without any such deposition being made Annas asked Jesus of his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus answered in surprise, "I spoke openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple whither the Jews always resort, and in secret spake I nothing. Why asketh thou me? Ask them that have heard me what I spake to them, behold they know what I said." This was in every word the voice of Hebrew justice, founded on the broad principles of their

judicial procedure, and recalling an unjust judge to the first duty of his great office. He had no right to ask Christ this question. It was the first duty of this august and venerable official, if he were to act at all, to inform Christ of the charge against Him, by the sworn testimony of witnesses.

It was this rule or principle of the Hebrew law which gives the fullest explanation of the answers of Jesus to the midnight questionings of this deposed High Priest. This answer of Jesus conveys to this High Priest the startling intelligence that Christ knew the law, and knew what His rights were. It was a demand for an open accusation and trial under the rules and forms of Hebrew law. It was a demand that the offense, if any, should be proven by the testimony of witnesses. Annas had been a High Priest for more than twenty years and was trained in the law of the Hebrew Commonwealth. He knew that it was unlawful to proceed with this trial in the night time. He knew that no man could be convicted in a capital case on his own confession. He knew that the accused had the right to a strict accusation under the testimony of witnesses. He knew that full freedom was to be accorded to the accused. He knew that he had no right to bind Christ. And he knew that Christ had the right to remind him of his duty, and of His own rights, by saying to him, "I spoke openly to the world. I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple whither the Jews always resort, and in secret I spake nothing. Why asketh thou me? Ask them which

have heard me what I have said unto them. Behold they know what I said." But when He made this appeal, for that which under the law was His right, an officer standing by struck Jesus in the face, saying: "Answerest thou the High Priest so?" The meek and lowly Saviour turning to the cruel officer said: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?" This expressed a desire on the part of Jesus to submit to that High Priest, whether or not He had the right to answer him as He had done. "Bear witness of the evil," that is, complain of Me to the Court and let the Court say whether I have the right to be heard in My own defense before you strike any more. It was too, an appeal for protection from further cruelty by the officers of the Court. It was an appeal for that freedom of speech, for that liberty of the accused, secured to every Hebrew citizen charged with an offense. It was an appeal for public justice.

But Annas answered this pathetic appeal by sending Him bound, with an armed force, to Caiaphas. Meantime much was going on outside. The members of the Sanhedrin present were seeking for witnesses against Christ. Matthew says, "False witnesses." The manner in which they were proceeding was grossly illegal and unjust. Hebrew judges, under their law, were counsel for the accused. Besides it was the duty of the High Priest to pronounce to each witness who came to testify against the life of a Hebrew citizen an address or

solemn adjuration, which still exists in the body of the Hebrew law. I quote it in full. The witness standing and the High Priest rising addresses him, saying: "Forget not, O, witness, that it is one thing to give evidence in a trial for money, and another in a trial for life. In a money suit if thy witness bearing shall do wrong, money may repair that wrong. But in this trial for life, if thou sinnest the blood of the accused and the blood of his seed to the end of time shall be imputed to thee. Therefore, was Adam created one man and alone to teach thee that if thy witness shall destroy one soul out of Isreal, he is held by the Scripture to be as if he had destroyed the world, and he who saves one such soul, to be as if he had saved the world. For a man, from one signet ring, may strike off many impressions, and all of them may be exactly alike; but he, the King of the Kings, of Kings, He the Holy and Blessed, has struck off from his type of the first man the forms of all men that shall live; yet so that no one human being shall be wholly alike to any other. Wherefore, let us think and believe that the whole world is created for a man, such as he whose life now hangs on thy words."

Who can measure the effect of this solemn address, by the Sacred Judge of Israel, upon men, who while it was being uttered were forced to gaze into the face of him, whose life it guarded? And yet what a mockery it was for that High Priest, who was himself a party to hunting for witnesses,

to pronounce this solemn adjuration to the witnesses who came to testify against the life of Christ, when he himself had declared in that very case that he "deemed it expedient that one man should die for the people."

But Christ is now on trial before Caiaphas and the little Sanhedrin in the night time, and on the very night of his arrest, and no charge is yet preferred against Him.

I have been unable, indeed, to determine for what He at first was arrested.

In Hebrew criminal trials the rule was that, "the least discordance in the testimony of the witnesses destroys its value." The depositions, however, of the leading witnesses, as before stated, constituted the charge; but when they spoke, the witnesses must agree together. Caiaphas and his Court are now at sea. They are hunting in that mob for persons who will testify to facts against Christ which will make a crime punishable by death. Two witnesses were found, and came, and testified as follows: One said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it again in three days.'" The other said, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple, which is made with hands, and in three days will build another made without hands.'"

Suppose that either, or both, of these witnesses stated the truth, what is the offense? For us to understand that either of these alleged and, indeed, false declarations contain a criminal charge they

should be accompanied by what, in our law are called innuendoes; that is, there should be attached to them an explanation like this, for instance, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands,'" meaning thereby, that He could destroy existing institutions, the law and the prophets; or meaning thereby, that He possessed supernatural power; or meaning thereby, that He could change the customs, which Moses delivered to us; or meaning thereby, that He could overturn the Roman power in Palestine. With this construction some of these charges would perhaps be, if untrue under the Hebrew law, blasphemy, and some might, perhaps, under the Roman law, be treason. It will be observed, hereafter, that when Christ was brought before Pilate, the High Priest sought to charge Him with treason against the Roman power. Let us now apply the rule of evidence that the, "Least discordance between the testimony of the witnesses destroys its value," and see where Caiaphas and his Court stand.

One witness says, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build another in three days.'" The other said, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"

Nothing said by the first witness about "destroying the temple of God and building another in three days." Nothing said by the last witness about de-

stroying "a temple made with hands and in three days building another, made without hands."

The discordance is very great, and the evangelist says, "and not even so did their witnesses agree together." They do not yet have an accusation against Christ and it is long past midnight. The situation for Caiaphas is becoming embarrassing. He has caused this man to be arrested without any charge being made against Him. He is unable now to make one himself, and he can find no one to do it for him. He must be relieved from this dilemma or he will be judicially and ecclesiastically disgraced. The situation, therefore, is not only becoming embarrassing, but it is becoming desperate, and desperate conditions must be met with desperate measures. And Caiaphas now resorts to them. Here they are: "And the High Priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus saying, 'Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?'" But He held His peace and answered nothing. He was under no obligation to answer. There was nothing charged against Him, and under the law He was not called upon to answer. The witnesses had destroyed each other, and Christ was still unaccused of a crime, and Caiaphas knew it, and he knew also that by calling on Christ to answer he was violating the law, and trampling under his sacerdotal feet the legal rights of Jesus of Nazareth. The fact undoubtedly is that the general course, of this night's proceedings, had been agreed upon by the leading members of the

Sanhedrin, before Christ was arrested, and that they, and not the witnesses, were conducting this prosecution and that in this august assembly the suppression, and probably the death of Christ, was prearranged.

"Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But the High Priest does not elicit an answer. The interrogation was unlawful. This silence, however, on the part of Jesus was not attributable to indignation caused by the willful misconduct of his accusers or the unfairness of his judges. It is believed that the ordinary rights of every Hebrew was present to the mind of Jesus, from the beginning to the end of this tragedy. He had no expectation of escaping, nor, indeed, any desire to do so. That very night in the garden he had submitted Himself to the terrible ordeal through which He was passing. He had prayed. "Oh, my father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." This was submission. All the gospel narratives combine to show that he had for some time been consciously moving on to this tragical and tremendous closing of His brief earthly career. His utterances in anticipation of it, during the previous week, and especially on the preceding day, show that He had not come to Jerusalem to perish by mistake. His silence during these proceedings mark the sublime heights of the self-possession which attended Him all through this trying night. If we are to inquire what were His

thoughts, we may suppose that they had reference to the scene which surrounded Him. There were gathered before and around Him the children of the House of Isreal, represented in their supreme council and greatest assembly. To this people he had always declared Himself commissioned. He had said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." In His instructions to His disciples He said, "Go not unto the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel." How He loved that people. Now at least they have thus met and all the ages of Israel's past arise in the mind of Him, who stands there to be judged, but who is thereafter to judge. But dawn is approaching and this deed of darkness must be completed during the night, and they have not yet found any testimony upon which a charge against Christ can stand. Having failed thus far to accuse Christ of anything worthy of death they cried out, "Art Thou the Christ, tell us?" To the eager hostile passionate and desperate questionings of this judicial assembly Jesus answered with a two-fold utterance.

"If I tell you, ye will not believe," was His calm reply. Was He thinking sadly of their utter disregard of His legal rights and the consequences of it to Himself and to them? "And if I also ask you," as He had done a few days before in the temple when they demanded His authority—"If I also ask you, ye will not answer Me and you will

not release Me." The Jewish law provided that no man could be convicted of a capital offense on his own confession. Because of the illegal questions they were asking Him, they saw in His face a light of more than earthly censure; and a mixture of terrible and hateful emotions, starting to their feet, they all cried, "Art Thou then the Son of God?" But above that assembly of aged and evil faces was now seen rising the High Priest of Israel; and all voices sunk away as the chief judge magistrate of the sacred nation arose, and demanded in the name of that God, whose office He bore, an answer to his most solemn adjuration.

"I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." This was the question for which the world stood waiting and the answer must be given. Angels poised on steady wing were hovering there to carry it back to heaven. Oh, the importance and the responsibility of this answer. Is Christ equal to the occasion? Yes, for now the answer came. "I am the Christ," that is: the Son of God. Then turning to the seventy that constituted the Sanhedrin sitting in their places of power, he said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

For any person to claim to be, "the Christ, the Son of God," under Jewish law was blasphemy, unless it were true, and blasphemy was punishable by death. They had not yet found any one who could make the charge. And Christ was under no

obligation, legal or moral, to the Court, whatever may have been His obligation to the world and to heaven to answer this question of the High Priest. If He remained silent He must be absolved and the hatred of the High Priest, the Sanhedrin and the mob remain unappeased, and the nocturnal proceedings of the supreme judicial and ecclesiastical tribunal of Israel result in failure. Hence, the attempt of the Sanhedrin to induce Christ to a confession by the question, "Art Thou the Christ, tell us?" and, failing in this attempt, the High Priest rises and says, "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." If he had said no, I am not, the world's greatest tragedy would have ended there. He knew the tremendous consequences that hung on his answer to that question. A world redeemed or lost. He knew also the consequences to Himself. That very night in the garden while "sweating as it were great drops of blood," He had prayed for the third time, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And in answer to this prayer angels came and strengthened Him. "I am the Christ,—the Son of God. Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." There was no equivocation to this answer. Neither the High Priest nor the Sanhedrin could mistake His meaning. He had come into the world to redeem it with His blood. Blood is the price of re-

demption. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, —that mystic power, enshrined in blood, the deepest, holiest secret of creation, that no scientist can analyze, more significant, indeed, than all the hidden treasures and choisest gems of earth. The blood itself he can analyze, but the life it enshrines is beyond his skill. He said it was for this that I was born. The ordinance of Israel provided that when any person blasphemed the name of God every man who heard it should rend his garment, from the top downwards. Then the High Priest rent his garment saying, "what further need have we of witnesses. Behold now, ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye?" And they answered and said, "He is guilty of death." Oh, what a confession this was of that High Priest to go down the ages, that they had failed to legally convict the Saviour of mankind. And they all condemned Him to die. Here now is the sentence that Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin pronounced upon Jesus Christ.

"Jerusalem, Friday, April 15th, A. U. C., 783," (that is 783 years from the founding of the City of Rome,) "Jesus of Nazareth is condemned to death by us for committing blasphemy.

JOSEPH CAIAPHAS,
President.
ANNAS,
Father of the House of Judgment."

"It is a fundamental principle with us," says Bartanora, one of the writers of the Talmud, "That

no man can damage himself by what he says in judgment." Maimonides, one of the most eminent of Jewish writers, and the author of an exhaustive treatise on the Mishna, says, "Our law condemns no man to death on his own confession." Putting these questions, therefore, to Jesus was unlawful and a violation of formal justice,and the sentence of death pronounced was not only unauthorized, but was forbidden by Jewish law.

Assuming now that the claim made by Jesus, that He was the Son of God, had come to the same form, but lawfully, before the Sanhedrin, were they not bound to give Christ an opportunity to procure His witnesses, and to consider whether such claim might not be true? What a magnificant array of witnesses He could have produced if He had desired to escape the dreadful death that awaited Him. If He had asked for time, and it had been given Him, He could have produced them there in Court and said, "Here, Caiaphas are my witnesses; the work that I do are evidence of mesiahship. Here is the leper I cleansed. Here is the centurian whose servant I healed; and here, too, is the servant himself. Here is Peter's wife's mother, whom I cured of the fever by simply touching her. This is the woman who had been afflicted for twelve years, but who was restored to health only by touching my garment. These men were on the ship when I stilled the tempest and calmed the sea. This is the man who has had the palsy for thirty-eight years, but to whose withered

limbs, I gave strength to take up his bed and go into his own house. This is the man whose withered hand I told him to stretch forth, which he did, and it became whole like the other. This man was lame and I made him walk; this one was deaf and I enabled him to hear; this one dumb, but I made him speak; this one blind from his birth, but I gave him sight. This young man was a lunatic, he would fall into the water and into the fire, but I clothed him in his right mind. This man and woman here is Jarius and his wife, whose daughter I raised from the dead, and the young woman standing between them, with her hands in theirs, is the daughter herself. This is the widow's son, who rose from the dead when I touched his bier and said unto him, "young man I command thee to arise." This man is Lazarus, who had been dead four days when I reached his tomb, but who, at my command, came out of the tomb in his grave clothes; and these women here are Mary and Martha, his sisters, who cared for him in his sickness, were with him at his death and saw him buried and witnessed his coming out of the tomb, and this body of men here are the assembled Jews, your countrymen and mine, who were there and heard Me say, "Lazarus, come forth," and saw him in obedience to my command come out of the tomb alive. Caiaphas, "I am the Christ, the Son of God, hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand power and coming in the clouds of heaven." *I am ready for trial.* Caiaphas and

his Court would have fled from the judgment hall, as abruptly as did the money changers when Christ over-turned their tables and drove them from His Father's Temple.

Besides the words of the great accused that he was, "the Son of God," were not blasphemously spoken, but were full of filial reverence for the Father. That they were false was of the essence of the crime and they should have been proven so to be before a conviction could legally be reached. An affirmative answer to the question of the High Priest, "Art Thou the Son of God," could never release a Hebrew tribunal from weighing the claim to the Messiahship. The judicial obligation resting on Caiaphas, when his adjuration was answered by Christ, by the words, "I am the Christ, the Son of God," was to respond, "What sign showeth Thou, then Jesus that we may see and believe Thee?" the claim alone to be the Messiah was no crime. To make it blasphemy it must be false, and when Caiaphas instead of calling on Christ for proof, closed the case, rent His garment and declared that He had spoken blasphemy, and led the Sanhedrin to pronounce on Him the judgment of death, it disclosed a pre-concerted plan, to terminate the semblance of judicial proceedings which were about to result in failure—or it was a sudden inspiration of evil at a moment when the cold, hard, cruel thoughts that had smouldered in the breast of the unjust judge blazed up at the touch of confronting righteousness into a final and murderous paroxysm.

And so was brought about this great condemnation and in regard to it we come to this conclusion. That a proceeding involving life and death, begun, continued and finished in the course of one night, with witnesses against the accused, who were sought for by the judges, but whose testimony was not sustained by each other, commencing with interrogatories, which Hebrew law did not sanction and ending with a demand for confession, which was by the law expressly forbidden and all followed twenty-four hours too soon by sentence of death, which described a simple claim to be the one who should fulfill the hopes of Israel as blasphemy, that such a proceeding had neither the form nor the fairness of a judicial trial. And here ends our consideration of the trial of Jesus Christ before the Hebrew Sanhedrin.

PART SECOND.

THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE.

PART SECOND.

THOSE of you friends, who heard Part First of this lecture, will remember that we left the Saviour in the hands of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, unlawfully, unjustly, wickedly, and cruelly convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death. But Palestine was at this time a Roman Province, and this sentence could not be carried out without the consent of the Roman Government, so early the next morning a council from the Sanhedrin led Him to Pilate, the Roman Governor, to get this consent, and we will now follow Him to that tribunal.

The law of Moses perpetuated, though modified by Christianity, has been more influential than any other code in the world. It was based on the word of God and addressed to all mankind. It had in it the spirit of Sinai. It was free from the degradation of caste. It exceeded the wisdom of the Egyptians and was infinitely nobler even in sacred symbolism. It gave dignity to the citizen and strength to the nation. But it has had one rival in the mighty jurisprudence of Rome. The Roman law has been transfused into all our modern life. Lawyers of every nation look back with filial reverence to the great jurisconsuls, of the great age of the imperial republic. There have been races of men in the world, who reflected as there are races who do reflect, in an eminent degree, that deep sense of righteousness which lies at the root of all law. And of such races, ancient and modern, the greatest was

that which at this time ruled over Palestine and over the world. When the sceptre departed from Judah, it passed into the strong smitting hands of Rome. But already nations had begun to exchange their terrors of its warlike might for that admiration of its administrative wisdom which has grown upon the world ever since. Its influence is traceable even now, two thousand years thereafter, to that innate instinct of justice which guided praetor and proconsul in every subject land long before Ulpian or Gaius had written out that instinct into immortal law.

At the time of which we speak, Pontius Pilate was the representative of Rome in Judea, governor, as he is called in the Gospels. It is important to note more fully what his position and powers were. He was the procurator, deputy, or attorney of Tiberius Caesar, in that province. Governor with civil, criminal and military jurisdiction, directly responsible to his great master at Rome. Now what was the relation of the Emperor, himself, to the inhabitants of Judea and to the world. This is again important and should be remembered. When Augustus Caesar became the undisputed chief of the republic, and determined so to continue, he remained nominally a mere private nobleman or citizen. To Roman the name of King was intolerable, and absolutism, except under republican forms was distasteful. He did not dare to attack the constitution of the state so he effected his object in another way. He gathered into his own hands all

the powers and functions and accumulated upon his own head all honors and privileges, which the state had for centuries, distributed among its great magistrates and representatives. He became the perpetual leader of the legislative house. He became also perpetual Pontifex Maximus, or chief of the national religion. He became tribune or guardian of the people with his person, thereby, made sacred and inviolable. He became perpetual consul, or supreme magistrate over the whole Roman world, with the control of its revenues, the disposal of its armies and the execution of its laws. And lastly he became perpetual imperator or military chief whose sword swept the globe from Indus and Gibralter to the pole. Only in this one man was now accumulated, and concentrated, all that for centuries had broadened and expanded under the magnificent abstraction of Rome. So he held in his hands all the essentials of imperial power. Tiberius, therefore, the first inheritor of this constitution of Augustus Caesar, was in the strictest sense the representative of that city that ruled the kings of the earth. And the Roman knight, that now ruled in Judea, was his representative in his public capacity. Strictly speaking, therefore, the governor of the Jewish nation at this time was Tiberius Caesar and Pilate whom the Jews quite properly called their governor was the procurator of the great proconsul, holding civil, criminal and military authority, by delegation, from him in whom was now concentrated the boundless authority of Rome. Such was the tribunal before

which the council of the Sanhedrin is now to lead their prisoner. Pilate sat in his praetorium on that morning of the preparation for the pass over to transact business and administer justice as usual. In what spot in Jerusalem his judgment seat at this time was set up can not be certainly known. It may have been within the fortress and under the tower of Antonia, that visible symbol of Roman predominance, which frowned by the side of the temple. Much more probably however, it was Herods praetorium, that magnificent palace to the north of the temple which Josephus describes, and which has been recently built by the Idumean kings. Their former palace was still in existence and the visit of the Roman procurator and the Tetrach of Gallilee, Herod Antipas, to this pass over feast, while it raises the question which of them occupied the new and more splendid residence suggests also the inevitable rivalry and possible emnity of their relations. If we suppose that Pilate, like Florus, asserted his right to occupy the new palace we may remember that its white marble semi-circle enclosed an open space, which looked out on the sacred City and was almost as public as the space between Antonia and the temple. In the open space in front of this or any other praetorium the movable bema or tribunal could at once be set up.

But on this morning Pilate was still sitting in the judgment hall.

Outside was the roar and bustle of the eastern city, awakening on a Passover dawn. Within was

the clash of Roman steel, the altars of the Roman gods and likely the sculptured frown of Tiberius Caesar.

Into that heathen chamber the priests and doctors of the Jewish nation would not enter during their sacred week and Pontius Pilate willingly removed their difficulty by coming with his soldier Lictors to the gate. His first words there as his eyes fell on the prisoner, who stood with a rope around his neck and his hands bound before him, was the indignant question, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" In this question we recognize at once the spontaneous voice of Roman justice. It also suggested to those who had Christ in charge Pilate's authority and his power to review any judgment the Jewish Sanhedrin might have pronounced on Jesus Christ. It was too, the instinctive utterance of a judge acting under one of the legal maxims of Roman jurisprudence, that, "It is not the manner of Romans to deliver any man to die until that he which is accused, have the accusers face to face and have license to speak for himself concerning the crime charged against him." The chief priests and scribes evaded the question. "What accusation bring ye against this man," is Pilate's question. "If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up unto thee," is the answer of the chief priests and scribes who had led him to Pilate. This insolent evasion did not have the effect to propitiate Pilate, who instantly put the matter on its true footing, by

his calm and it seems to me under the circumstances his somewhat indignant or sarcastic reply. "Take ye him and judge him, said Pilate, according to your law." Ah, they did not expect that answer; they were balked, and could go no further. They could condemn, but they could not execute their sentence without the consent of Pontius Pilate, and sullenly and with an air of injured innocence they answer, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." This statement revealed that there was something they were trying to cover up, in their answer, by the use of the word "malefactor," instead of telling Pilate what their charge against Christ was. They did not like to confess to him that they had convicted Christ of blasphemy and sentenced him to death without any accusation being preferred against Him. They hoped to pass by that, and secure his approval of their death sentence, without an investigation by him, of the offense of which they had convicted Him, or of the sentence of death even they had pronounced upon Him. The Talmud asserts that "forty years before the destruction of the temple, judgment in capital causes was taken away from Israel." The chronolgy of this statement may not be strictly accurate; but the Jews were a conquered and subject nation, and their jurisdiction on many subjects would likely be restricted, and if in anything, on the power of life and death. Of this they reminded Pilate when they answered him, "It is not lawful for *us* to put any man to death." The effort on the part of these Jews

was to get Pilate's consent to, or approval of the sentence of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and to prevent him from assuming full jurisdiction and authority and responsibility in the case, whether original or of review.

But the first words of the Procurator when he met the chief priests and scribes with their prisoner at the gate, bound Pilate publicly to deal with this case not in an administrative but in a judicial capacity. The supreme civil ruler had now interposed his jurisdiction between an accused man and the chief authorities of a subject nation, and his honest careful deliberate and candid judgment in a case of life and death was after he was sufficiently informed to be given. But now there must be an accusation. Remember Caiaphas and his Sanhedrin had convicted Christ of blasphemy and sentenced Him to death without any accusation being made against Him, but because He had declared Himself in open court in answer to questions asked Him to be, "The Christ, the Son of God" without His accusers proving it to be false; or permitting Christ even to prove it to be true. These accusers doubtless thought that if they preferred this charge of blasphemy against Christ, Pilate would consider it a religious or ecclesiastical question and pay but little attention to it, and so they would fail to secure his approval of their death sentence. They therefore invented a charge and in answer to Pilate's question, finally replied, "We found this man perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself is

Christ, a king." This is a very different charge from that which they had convicted Him. Perverting the nation seems to be somewhat ambiguous. Perverting what nation, the Roman or the Jewish? To which, if either, did Christ owe allegiance? He was a Jew. His natural allegiance, therefore, was to the Jewish nation. But that nation had been subjected to the Roman power. Did Christ, therefore, owe allegiance to the latter? Yes, He undoubtedly did, but this charge at all events was intended to be a charge of treason against Rome. But "perverting the nation" in what manner? What had He done. "And forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." If the first charge, the ambiguous charge of "perverting the nation" were true, the second, "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar" was false. Instead of forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, Christ had said, "Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." If tribute were due from the Jewish to the Roman nation He had not interfered with it. "Saying that He, Himself, was Christ, a king" was true, but it was not true in the sense that His accusers desired it to be received by the Roman governor. But the prompt utterance of the Procurator forced them into the villainy they doubtless would have avoided, and so between the ambiguous charge of "Perverting the nation," upon the one hand, and claiming the royal Messiahship upon the other, they thrust the falsehood, "Forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." They desired to make it impossible for Pilate to overlook

the charge of treason against Rome. There is no mistake as to what they wished Pilate to consider it was, they charged Christ with. It was majestas. The greatest crime known in Roman law, an attack upon the Sovereignty or supreme majesty of the Roman state. This charge, under the Roman law, if made against a Roman citizen, must be in writing, specifying the acts which constitute the treason. But if made against a provincial Jew it was not necessary for it to be in writing. Christ, therefore, stood before the Roman judge, who could summarily exercise absolute power, even the power of life and death, charged with the crime of treason against Rome, which was punishable by death, and that death, by crucifixion. His situation, therefore, was extremely perilous. The skill and ability now shown by Pilate upon the one side, and Christ upon the other, is very remarkable.

If you will follow me carefully and thoughtfully through, you will see with what consummate ability Pilate conducted this prosecution, or investigation, upon the one side and Christ, the defense, upon the other.

Both of them now being in the judgment hall, Pilate thinking perhaps he might catch Christ off His guard, suddenly put this question to Him, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" To have answered, yes, would have been a confession of the charge of treason. It would have been equivalent to claiming that the Jews were His subjects, and not the subjects of Tiberius Caesar, and so a conflict of authority

would at once arise. Against the claims of such a person, it was the official duty of Pilate to protect his government. To have answered no, would have been to deny his spiritual kingship, and Christ could not do that; so he answered, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" This was not as one might at first suppose, a request to know what others were saying of Him during His absence. He was indifferent as to that. These words had a deeper significance; they were equivalent to this question, and to this explanation. In what sense, Pilate, dost thou use the expression? If thou sayest it of thyself, in the sense in which a Roman would naturally use the word, then I am not the king of the Jews. But if others told it thee of me, if others told thee what I have said, and thou art using the words of Hebrew prophesy, or of the world's hope, then before I answer, I want to make an explanation. It seems to me as if Pilate's answer showed some impatience, perhaps anger. He said, "Am I a Jew?" equivalent to saying, I am no Jew, and then he added, "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?" The answer of Jesus to this question and to this declaration of Pilate let a flood of light into the soul of the Roman judge. He who had remained silent before the midnight Sanhedrin, and who made even now no answer to their dissimulated accusation, frankly responded to the Roman Governor, who evidently desired to know the truth of the case. He said, "My kingdom is not

of this world," and then he argued it in this way to Pilate. He said, "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight; that I should not be delivered to the Jews." He did not claim to be a king because of his lineal descent from David, an earthly king. His title to royalty was derived from a higher source.

This declaration is to be considered particularly in a forensic and judicial sense. It implies a kingship, but it specially avoids the particular kind of kingship charged. It seems to acknowledge that a kingdom of this world might be a legitimate object of attack by Caesar's deputy, but it denies that a kingdom not of this world should be an object of attack from any of the powers of earth. That Christ had no desire to attack Caesar's empire, is evident from the famous scene of the tribute money. He is asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or no?" He replies, "Show me a penny." One is shown him. He asks, "Whose image and superscription is this?" He is told that it is Caesar's. He replies, "Render, therefore (that is because they are Caesar's), unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Christ's argument was this, that as this coin came from Caesar's mint, as it had on it Caesar's stamp, it was his, and should be returned to him. He wanted nothing that was Caesar's, not even a penny. This makes it certain that it was no part of Christ's plan to attack the Roman power, and that the charge of treason against Rome was false. That as his

kingdom was not of this world, his servants were not expected to fight. The opposite, however, follows, which Pilate doubtless observed, that is, that a monarch of a kingdom of this world may be defended by an armed force of his subjects. This doubtless made a deep impression upon Pilate, and probably convinced him that Christ was innocent of any contemplated conspiracy against Rome. And yet he had spoken of a kingdom, a kingdom, too, in this world, but not of it. Pilate now, with true judicial tact, puts his finger on the exact point which he desires to be brought from negative implication to express statement or declaration on the part of Jesus Christ. "Art thou then a king?" he asked of his prisoner.

As before the adjuration of the high priest, so now the representative of all the greatness of earth and heaven answered, making a crisis in the world's history, "Thou sayest it" (that is, I am a king). He who spoke so to the Roman governor knew that he was offering himself to the cross, and that the next few hours might close his fateful life. And then he carefully and cautiously added, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." This supreme utterance entered deeper into the mind and heart of Pilate than the assertion even of separate spiritual and earthly kingdoms. It proclaimed that which is the basis of all human veracity and virtue—the existence of an eternal world of truth, outside of man; a universal and divine system of things, over

which men have no power, but which it is their highest privilege to recognize and confess. And those do recognize it who are of the truth. Christ proceeded, "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate, interrupting Him, asks, "What is Truth?"

No answer to this question is recorded. I have wondered, however, if one were not given. I have wondered if Christ did not tell Pilate there in the judgment hall, what that Truth was to which He had come to bear witness. If he did not tell him, that He had no earthly possession, and wanted none, that His kingdom was the kingdom of peace and love, of righteousness and mercy, of kindness and charity, strictly spiritual. That he was on this earth to inculcate every virtue, and lead a spotless life. That earthly titles had no charm for Him, that the world was lying in sin, and He had come to redeem it. I have wondered if Christ did not say to Pilate there in answer to that qeustion, "*I* am the truth," "the resurrection and the life." But whether He did so or not, something convinced Pilate, and he took Him out on the tessalated pavement and pronounced Him innocent.

Judges in their decisions never go beyond the questions submitted to them, but here was a judge who went way beyond the questions submitted to him. He not only declared that Christ was innocent of the infraction of any Roman law, but he declared Him to be without a fault. He said, "I find in Him no fault at all." Wonderful statement! Where has there ever been a man on trial, except

Jesus Christ, of whom his judge could say, "I find in Him no fault at all." He is a sinless man. This was the conviction of a judge who desired to be just, and honest, but of a weak and vascillating man. It was also the first step which finally developed into a weak and cowardly course of indecision, complacence, bluster, subserviency, persuasion, evasion, protest, compromise, reluctance, duplicity and cowardice that has forever photographed this Roman governor as an unjust and cowardly judge. As soon as this determination that there was no fault in Christ was announced by Pilate, there came from the chief priests and the mob a storm of accusation. "And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewery, from Galilee to Jerusalem." They accused him of many things. And Pilate, growing weaker and weaker, asked him, saying, "Answereth thou nothing?" "Behold how many things they accuse thee of."

Poor, weak man! He had but just acquitted Him, and declared Him to be without a fault, and that should have ended the matter. But see now how he turns against Christ. Yet Jesus no more answered anything insomuch that Pilate marvelled." But Pilate caught at the mention of Galilee, and asked whether the man were a Galilean. Being informed that he was, he sent him to Herod Antipas, who was governor of Galilee, but was then in Jerusalem. Pilate desired to rid himself of this troublesome prisoner. Troublesome because he knew Him

to be innocent on the one hand, and because the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders thirsted for His blood on the other. But the Jews followed Him and vehemently accused Him before Herod. Herod, however, politely and prudently declined to take jurisdiction of the case; and after asking Christ many questions and receiving no answer, he, together with his soldiers, mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and returned Him to Pilate. This was a white robe, the Jewish royal color, and Herod's object in clothing Christ with it may have been to show his contempt for such a king, or, it may have been to ridicule the Jews by presenting to them Christ as their king, dressed in royal robes, and to irritate them as the toreador waves the red flag. But here was a man charged with majestas, standing at Caesar's judgment seat, and must be judged, and the "Idumean Fox," as Christ called Herod Antipas (Luke 13:31-32), may have dreaded the lion's paw which was in Rome, and sought to avoid it by exchanging courtesies with the lion's deputy at Jerusalem. So he sent Pilate a note, which, being translated and made to conform to a similar communication from one judge to another, in our day, reads as follows:

"ASMONEAN PALACE, JERUSALEM.
Friday, April 15, A. U. C. 783.

(That is 783 years from the founding of the City of Rome.)

Honorable Pontius Pilate:

I have examined Jesus of Nazareth, according to your request, and find no cause of death in him.

HEROD ANTIPAS,
Governor of Galilee."

Then Pilate called together the Chief Priests, Scribes and Rulers and said unto them reproachfully, "You brought this man unto me as one who perverted the people, and behold, I having examined Him before you, found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof you accuse him. No! Nor yet Herod, for I sent you to Him, and behold, nothing worthy of death has been done by Him; I will, therefore, chastise Him and release Him." Oh, what weakness, what cowardice! What was he going to whip Christ for, if there was no fault in Him? What an infamous attempt to compromise with the mob. Pilate now offers to mangle an innocent man with the *savage Roman scourge,* with an army at his command, and five hundred Roman soldiers at his side, he makes this offer to appease the demands of the chief priests, and the mob, consisting of but a portion, indeed a minority of a conquered and a subject nation, of which he was governor, possessed of absolute power with the great Republic of Rome to sustain him. Pilate's duty was plain. He should have said, with indignation, "You brought this man unto me as one who perverted the people, and behold, I having examined Him before you, found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No! Nor yet Herod, for he sent Him back unto us, and

behold, nothing worthy of death had been done by Him, I shall therefore release Him and discharge Him and protect Him, with all the power of Imperial Rome." If he had done this, he would have shown himself to be a worthy judge. But the Jews refused his infamous and cowardly offer of compromise. And Pilate, in his report in defense of his act of concession to the Jews, thereafter made to Tibereas Caesar, says, "I have at length been forced to consent to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to prevent a tumult among the Jews, though it was very much against my will, for the world never saw and probably never will see, a man of such extraordinary piety and uprightness. I did all I could to save Him from the malice of the Jews, but the fear of a total insurrection made me sacrifice Him, to the peace and interest of your empire."

Pilate doubtless tried in good faith to save Christ, but either was not possessed of the courage required, or desired to be considered popular with the Jews. Probably the latter. He left them, however, with the impression that he had sent Him to the cross, but intended to make an appeal to their compassion before he finally did so. He attempted, perhaps, in accordance with a custom to satisfy his conscience by the idle ceremony of washing from his hands blood yet unshed, but for the shedding of which he thereafter became responsible, and by making this false statement to the multitude, "I am innocent of the blood of this right-

eous man." Then Pilate, that is, his soldiers under his direction, scourged Jesus. We will make no attempt to describe this terrible flagilation. It is too horrible to dwell upon for one moment.

When this was over, and He was passing through the judgment hall, preparatory to going to Calvary, Pilate saw Him there with his hands tied, bruised and mangled, crowned with thorns, the blood oozing from a score of gashes, coursing its way down His cheeks, His beard and His garments, even to the very floor; and as he stood and gazed on the pale face of the friendless, defenseless, swooning, bleeding Christ, clothed in the scarlet robe, soaked through and through with His blood, that precious blood that redeemed the world, he could not help but pity Him, and, in the hope that he might move the mob to compassion, he led Him out on the pavement and said to the multitude, "Ec ce homo" (behold the man). And the chief priests and officers cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him, His blood be upon us and our children." Oh, what a curse they brought down upon themselves and their posterity, and how fearfully has Heaven executed it. And Pilate said, "Why, what evil hath he done?" But they cried the more, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and Pilate said, "Take ye Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." So here they secured the cowardly approval of Pontius Pilate to the death sentence, which he knew to be wrong, that Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin had pronounced on Jesus Christ. And the chief

priests, trying to justify their conduct, answered Pilate and said, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die, for He made Himself the Son of God."

The Son of God! mused Pilate. This was the first he had heard of that. The Son of God! The Son of God!

I must know what that means before I further go. This mysterious man may be from another world. I will ask Him. And then Pilate tremblingly said to Jesus, there in the judgment hall, "Whence art thou?" But from the first moment of his indecision, Jesus had given him no answer. Pilate, now full of wrath, attempted to intimidate His suffering victim. Oh, cowardice and infamy beyond example! "Speaketh thou not to me?" said Pilate. Pontius Pilate, this representative of the great Roman Republic, this deputy of Tiberias Caesar. "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and the power to release Thee?" Jesus gives the final word of answer, and how like a God. If you are in doubt as to whether Christ was divine, make Him a man among men, and see if he stays there. Hear His answer to this question of the representative of that Imperial City that ruled the world, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, unless it were given thee from above." Equivalent to saying, the power you have over Me, Pilate, does not come from Rome or Tiberias Caesar, but it comes from My kingdom. I could arrest it by a word, or a

thought, or a wish. It is you, poor Pilate, who are weakest.

Jesus pitied the hopeless bewilderment of Pilate whom guilt and cowardice had changed from a ruler to a slave. In His compassion He said to him there in the judgment hall, "He who hath delivered Me unto thee, hath the greater sin." Equivalent to saying, thou art committing a terrible crime, Pilate, but Judas and Annas and Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin and these Jews are more to blame than thou.

Thus with infiinite dignity and infinite tenderness, did Jesus judge His judge. It is not surprising that this scene or these words, or these thoughts should have prompted Pilate to make one more effort to save himself from his own weakness, but it was too late. The Jewish heirarchs had now taken the full measure of the man, and their final argument was well fitted to break down in him all of the little conscience and courage that remained. Here it is, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." Pilate was a personal dependent upon the favor of the Emperor. He had procured his position through Sejanus, who was about this time deposed from power, and was in disgrace at Rome. Pilate's fear was not groundless. Tiberias was on the throne a few years later, when Pontius Pilate was superceded, and embassadors from Palestine, relying on the attachment of their nation, to the imperial house, were sent to

Rome to testify against the degraded and recalled governor. The shadow of that not very distant, but surely approaching day, paralyzed Pilate, on that fateful Friday morning. What, he thought, if there should be a riot, and I should be accused before Caesar of spoliation and bloodshed; and suppose, too, that there should be added to these that other charge, faithlessness to Caesar, which was the compliment and crown of every other crime. Pilate had held out against every other argument, but fell before the well chosen words, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." A final sentence could only be pronounced by a Roman judge from the judgment seat. Pilate ascended the tribunal, and now there came to him a message—a message from a kind and loving hand; it was from Procula, his wife, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." Then Pilate, feeling encouraged, and thinking he saw a way of escape, turned to the multitude, and said, "Which of the two will ye that I release unto you, Barabas, the robber and murderer, or Jesus?" Fatal question! Fatal hesitation! Fatal error! And they answered him, "Barabas," and Pilate said, "What, then, shall I do with Jesus?" and they cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him, let Him be crucified," and Pilate said with bitter irony, "Shall I crucify your king?" But the Jews were equal to the sarcasm and shouted, "We have no king but Caesar." Then Pilate, turning to the suffering Christ, said, "Ibis ad crucem"—

translated, "You must go to the cross."

What now is our conclusion? It is this: That there were two trials and that both were conducted with but very slight regard to the forms of the two most famous jurisprudences of the world. That in both the judges were unjust and the trials unfair. That Christ died because in the Jewish Sanhedrin, or Ecclesiastical Council, He claimed to be the Son of God, and the Messiah of Israel, and in the world-wide Roman tribunal because He claimed to be Christ, a king. That Pilate surrendered Him to the fury of the mob, of which he himself became a part; that His crucifixion was murder, and the blood shed on Calvary was the blood of murder.

Now, my friends, putting these two lectures together, I have been speaking to you at considerable length, more than two hours, about the most momentous event in history, and you have listened to me very patiently, and I thank you for it, but I want your attention a few minutes longer.

The trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ has no parallel in importance in the annals of time.

What was that providence that made every decision of the Hebrew Tribunal in that trial wrong, and every word uttered by Christ, and every position taken by Him, and every silence by Him maintained, right?

What was that Providence that made every decision of the Roman Tribunal right, and yet that sent Him to the cross.

Listen! No crucifixion, no cross; no cross, no

Christ; no Christ, no Christian religion, no redemption!

The hour that Christ, so many times said, had not yet come, had now come—the hour of His death.

It was the most critical hour, the most crowded with great events, since hours began to be numbered, since time began to run. It was the hour in which Christ was glorified by His sufferings. It was the supreme hour of distress and of blood. It is distress that enables every great character, and it was distress that glorified the Son of God. In this hour he taught all mankind how to suffer and how to die. What magnanimity in all his words and actions, on this great occasion! No upbraiding, no complaining expression escapes his lips. He betrayed no symptoms of a weak, a discomposed or an impatient mind. With all the dignity of a sovereign, he conferred pardon on a penitent fellow sufferer; with a greatness of mind beyond example He spent His last moments in apologies and prayers for those who were shedding His blood. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was the hour in which Christ atoned for the sins of mankind, and accomplished the redemption of the world. The hour when the great sacrifice was offered up, the efficacy of which reaches back to the first transgression of man, and extends forward to the end of time. The hour when from the cross as from an high altar the blood was flowing, that washed away the guilt of the nations. This was the hour, when the long series of prophecies, visions,

types and symbols were accomplished. You behold all the priests and sacrifices, all the rights and ordinances, all the types and symbols assembled together, to receive their consummation. It was the hour of the abolition of the Jewish law of sacrifice, and the introduction of the Gospel. The hour of terminating the old and beginning the new dispensations. Far and wide over the vast throng of His enemies, He cried with a loud voice, and almost in His last breath, as if giving His final shout of eternal triumph, "It is finished!" When he uttered these words he announced the accomplishment of His mission—the redemption of mankind.

He fixed the ever memorable point of time, which separates the old religious era from the new. On one side of the point of separation; you behold the law with its priests, its altars, its sacrifices, its rights, and ceremonies retiring from sight. On the other side you behold the Gospel, with its simple and venerable institutions coming forward into view. Significantly was the veil of the inner sanctuary of the temple rent in twain, as if the Eternal God came out to lead His Son to glory. This was the hour when the legal high priest delivered up his Urim, his Thummim, his breast plate, his robes and his incense, and Christ stood forth as the great High Priest of all succeeding generations. Altars on which the fire had blazed for ages were now to smoke no more. This was the hour that shook the foundations of every pagan temple. When the priest fled from his falling shrine, and the heathen

oracles became dumb forever. This was the hour in which the Saviour erected that spiritual kingdom which is never to end. The hour when His enemies imagined they had accomplished their plan for His destruction. The reed which they placed in His hands became a rod of iron. The sceptre with which He was to rule the world in righteousness. The cross which they thought was to stigmatize Him with infamy, became the ensign of His renown. Instead of being the reproach of His followers, it was to be their boast and glory. It was to hang from the neck of beauty to be assumed as the distinction of the most powerful monarchs, and to wave in the banners of victorious armies when the memory of Herod and Pilate should be accursed, when Jerusalem should be reduced to ashes and the Jews should have no country, but should be wanderers over all the earth.

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